



*Worshiping God In*

# Spirit and Truth

*A Magazine for Understanding  
God's Truth*

July – September 2015

Spiritual Potpourri



# IN THIS ISSUE

**From the Pastor .....2**

**The Unity of Spirit and Faith....7**

**“Reading Between the Lines”...11**

**God’s Revelation About  
“Counterfeit Christianity”.....14**

***God: Accused or Defended?.....18***

an open letter from:

# The Pastor

---

There are three basic *arguments of resistance* that are used against your *arguments of proof* when you attempt to explain God's truth to someone. I call them *technicalities, generalities, and theology*. I want to explain them so you will be able to spot them more readily when someone injects them as *arguments of proof* into your spiritual conversations. These three arguments are passed off as being reasonable, logical, and valid for defending one's so-called "faith" in or ignorance of what they believe. In this explanation there is contained a very serious warning to those who seek to worship God in spirit and in truth: *Do not fall prey to these arguments of resistance and begin to use them to excuse your own spiritual laziness and incompetence.*

The remainder of this issue will be what I call "Spiritual Potpourri"—a miscellany of spiritual lessons that I presented at various times to our local congregation for their personal spiritual growth and development. May God bless your search for His truth as you study these *arguments of resistance*.

---

## The Psychology of the Religious Experience

*Psychology* is the study of man's mental processes and the behaviors associated with them. It is evident that different minds will produce different behaviors. While it is true that reactions to the same stimulus might be *similar*, it is also true that they are not *exactly* the same. This is based on the observation of the late Southern comedian, Dave Gardner, who famously said that you cannot do something *again*. He observed that you might be able to do something *similar*, but you cannot do that particular action *again*. Each subsequent repetition of that action is also *unique*. All repetitions of the original action are *similar*, but they are not *exactly the same*.

It would be reasonable, then, to conclude that whatever experience one person has with "God" is not exactly the same as all others who have had experiences with "God." This is often referred to as your "personal relationship with God and/or Jesus Christ." The "proof" scripture for the personal uniqueness of this relationship is found in Philippians 2:12, 13: "Work out **your own** salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure" (KJV; emphases added). From this would emerge the argument that no other human can dictate what is happening between you and "God" as you move toward that "salvation."

Martin Luther asserted as much when he began his protest against the dictatorial actions of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Out of that struggle emerged a very large doctrinal umbrella that asserted the importance of the individual's personal relationship with "God." It is called the *individual priesthood of the believer*: "Every believer is a priest under Jesus Christ and has the right to read and interpret the scriptures for himself as the Holy Spirit leads him."

Here is how Herschel H. Hobbs describes it:

It involves the very essence of man's relation to God as taught by Jesus Christ. In the entire Bible it entails God's revelation of himself and man's ability to receive, understand, and respond to revelation. For the Christian it involves the presence of the indwelling Christ through the person of the Holy Spirit who guides believers into all spiritual truth (*The Baptist Faith and Message*, Nashville: Convention Press; 1971; p. 8).

This, in Baptist terms, is the doctrine of "the competency of the soul in matters of religion." It excludes the interference by any other source in the choices and beliefs of the individual and his personal relationship with "God."

Now, the net result of these age-old doctrines is very predictable: Whatever interpretation *you* put on scripture is acceptable to "God" because that relationship is *personal*. You are a *part* of the body of Christ—

maybe a *kidney* or an *eyeball*—but you do not have to function like a *pancreas* or an *ear*. You are an individual *part* that is serving a *unique purpose* in the body of Christ. However you read and interpret scripture is relative only to the *unique purpose* that you serve in Christ’s body.

Hobbs, to his credit, added this caveat:

...Said interpretation must be in harmony with the overall teachings of the Bible. And it must adhere to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, for the Holy Spirit neither contradicts himself nor denies God’s revelation in his Son (Ibid; emphases added).

In far too many cases, this caveat is ignored. How can you know that?

Well, the number of “Christian” denominations has now grown to almost **33,000** world-wide! Admittedly, all within any given denomination do not even agree with one another about who/what “God” is and what He is up to. It appears as though all of them—in order to be part of the body of Jesus Christ— must be led by a schizophrenic Holy Spirit whose understanding of God’s “truth,” on top of being tenuous, is not an exact science. How is harmony with the scriptural revelation achieved in such circumstances?

That said, let’s discuss the three *arguments of resistance* and see how the problem just presented can be solved satisfactorily according to God’s word. After all, if you desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, then it makes sense that you will pay more attention to His revelation than to your own opinions and the tools you use to avoid such worship.

### *Technicalities*

In a recent conversation with a woman who was a very nice, sincere, spiritual person, I attempted to explain a point of contention between us. As I pointed out what God’s word says with regard to the topic of our conversation, she said something like this: “That’s just a *technicality*.” What she meant was that (as far as she was concerned) the point was really insignificant and not worth considering within the realm of her religious thought and understanding. What she *actually* said, without knowing it, was that it was “a detail meaningful only to a *specialist*.” I do not deny being somewhat of a *specialist* in biblical thought and understanding.

*Technical* means that one possesses knowledge and ability that makes him skillful in something—like a craftsman or skilled artisan. A *specialist* is someone who devotes himself to some special branch of learning or activity. While I received my two B.A. degrees in German and Theology (with added *specialties* in English and Education), I also received my Master’s degrees in Education Administration and Supervision and Theology. After that, I received my higher degree of *Education Specialist* in Education Administration and Supervision. So, I am both a *technician* and a *specialist*. You can add to that my experience in the building trades where I became a *journeyman* sheet metal mechanic and acquired skills in other areas of the building trades. I understand the world of *technicalities* and *specialties*.

Trust me, I am being *very technical* when I explain all of this to you. All that I have written thus far is one technicality after another born out of my other *specialty*: *Theology*—the study of religious ideas and beliefs relative to God and His relationship to mankind. But, my *technical* understanding and my *specialties* do not make me the ultimate voice of truth in any particular matter. I’m simply explaining the uselessness of the glib argument that such-and-such is a *technicality*—especially if you mean that it is *insignificant* and *worthless* as proof of truth.

The larger question is whether or not God requires His people to possess spiritual knowledge and ability that would make them *skillful* in their understanding of Holy Scripture. A *technical* approach would be to search the scriptures to find the answer to that question. In this exercise, I am going to use my special skill to point you to a spiritual technicality.

In Acts 17:11, Luke describes a group of Christians known as the Bereans. The unique characteristic of these people was this:

...They received the word [the preaching of the Apostles] with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures [the Old Testament] daily [in order to ascertain] whether these things [they were being taught] were so.

They listened attentively enough to remember what they had been taught, and they did their homework to ascertain that scripture actually taught what they were told. Would you suppose that their *daily* search of the scriptures would eventually make them *skillful*? How long do you suppose it would take for such a practice

to make them *specialists* in God's word? After all, they were checking up on the men who had delivered to them God's truth.

In Romans 12:2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Paul uses the term *prove* relative to God's will and the things to which the true Christian should hold fast as God's truth. The term is translated from the Greek term *dokimazo*, which means that you not only *ascertain its validity* as God's revealed truth and *examine it in an effort to learn it*, but you also put it to the test as a guiding principle of truth by which to *live*.

How do you *know* if God's revelation is valid unless you put it to the test in your daily life (see Malachi 3:8-12)? God expects you to do both: (a) put it to the test and (b) *know* what He has revealed. John says a similar thing in 1 John 4:1 when he admonishes true Christians to "...*try* the spirits [in order to prove] whether or not they are of God..." (emphases added).

There is another interesting *technicality* in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. God reveals to His people, by the power of the Holy Spirit, *specialized knowledge* that the common, ordinary person of the world—as well as the educated and rich lords of the realm—do not know and cannot understand. You do not get it by thinking and hoping and wishing and planning and scheming. It comes by *direct revelation* from God Himself through the power of *Holy Spirit* exerting an action upon your mind in order for you to understand it. Simply put, if God does not *will* for you to understand it, then you will not understand it.

Here are some brief examples of how *technicalities* affect the *specialized* knowledge:

1. Is there only one, single "God" who reveals Himself in three different roles—or, are there presently two God-beings involved in the revelation of *truth*? (See Deuteronomy 6:4; John 1:1-2; Philippians 2:5-11.)
2. Was the archangel Michael caused by God to become Jesus Christ? (Read Hebrews 1.)
3. Which day of the week did God designate as His appointed Sabbath rest? (Compare Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 2:27, 28, and Matthew 5:17, 18.)
4. Are true Christians allowed to teach (in contradiction to Matthew 5:17, 18) that God

did away with His own law by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? (Colossians 2:14)

5. Do Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 *really mean* that the true Christian is not supposed to observe Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Hallowe'en, and Christmas?

6. Does the fulfillment of Daniel 7:25 allow true Christians to worship God in any manner they see fit? (Jude 3)

7. Is there one true Church of God—or is it made up of over 33,000 so-called "Christian denominations" who contradict one another's doctrines? (Ephesians 4:4-6)

8. Is man a soul that has a body, a body that has a soul, or a mortal creature of the dust that is capable of being destroyed? (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 3:18-22; 9:4-10; Ezekiel 18:4, 20)

*Differences of opinion* do not matter much when one is pursuing the truth of God (John 17:17). Becoming highly skilled in God's word is expected of every believer who calls himself a true Christian and claims to be led by God's Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17). Being led by God's Holy Spirit presupposes that every true Christian will be led to understand God's word *in the same way* (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:4-6). Need I point out that all of this is merely *technical*? (Figure out what I mean by that.)

## Generalities

Let me explain the *general* principle of polls. I am sure that, at one time or another, you have participated in a poll where you have been asked to give your opinion on several questions or statements. The idea behind a poll is to take a *sampling* of opinions by which a *generalized conclusion* can be reached. The most reliable poll will include 1,000+ participants—the more participants the greater the accuracy. They will always say that there will be a percentage of points by which the poll can be "off" as far as specific accuracy is concerned.

Once the pollsters have tallied the answers, the tally will give them enough "evidence" that the targeted

group's answers can be *generalized* to apply to the public. In this way, they derive a *general* conclusion for a particular instance: "Eight out of ten doctors recommend Product X for relief of Z." That conclusion is *general*; it might or might not be true in reality, depending on which "general" group they polled.

Now, the next *argument of resistance* to God's truth is pursued by the use of such *generalities*. This is an approach by which someone attempts to make a vague or inadequate statement apply to all instances or individuals of a class or group ("Everybody is doing it."). How does this manifest itself in actual practice?

Let's take a thought from Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:2: "For I am determined not to know any thing [sic] among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Surely Paul did not mean that such a thought was his only concern among all the things he could otherwise teach them! The proof lies in the 14 books of the New Testament that are credited to him. If this thought is *generalized* throughout the entirety of scriptural revelation, then it suggests that all else in scripture is of little consequence. The only thing that makes any difference in God's revelation to man is "...Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

I have known people who have disdained all of the messages a minister could preach except those that dealt with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ! They were not interested in anything else in scripture simply because they fastened their attention on this personally preferred scripture that represented to them the heart and core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Were they not interested in the subsequent *resurrection* of Jesus Christ? If He was not raised from the dead, then our faith in His *death* is useless, and we have made God a liar (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).

There is little to be gained when you attempt to hold a meaningful scriptural conversation with someone with that kind of mindset. The sad thing about this mindset is that it does not take much study, skill, or expertise to maintain it. It is useless because it is so shallow and lacking in real faith and substance.

Another example of this mindset is that of someone trying to draw you into some area of commonality with them. The idea is that we can forget about all differences if we can merely concentrate on our commonalities. I know that this is often a strategy used in attempting a compromise for a treaty or business deal. However, it is not a workable tactic in deciding God's truth.

An individual who had engaged me in a religious conversation was not agreeing with me about many of

the specifics I brought to bear on his proselytizing questions and statements. So, he used the *generality* card and said: "We have a lot in common." My immediate question was: "Precisely what do we have in common?" He said: "Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God. Life after death."

One would think that such commonalities would be enough for us to be in "agreement." Not so. I replied: "You believe that Jesus is given too much credit and that detracts from the Father's glory. I believe that Jesus Christ was elevated to a high position in the plan of salvation by the Father Himself [see Philippians 2:5-11]. You believe that Jesus Christ was originally a *created* being [based on the part of Micah 5:2 that speaks of *goings forth*] named Michael the Archangel. I believe that He is *uncreated* and very God as much as the Father is very God. You believe in a Kingdom of God, but it is not a Kingdom in which Jesus Christ and the saints rule over a human population to bring them to salvation. And, life after death means to you an undying flesh and bones existence, as opposed to eternal life in a spirit body like that of the glorified body of Jesus Christ [see 1 Corinthians 15:34-58]. No, we have absolutely nothing in common."

*Technically speaking*, it is impossible to link the true body of Jesus Christ to the many contradictions in faith and belief found in traditional "Christianity"—as much as it is impossible to link the true body of Jesus Christ to the faith and beliefs of the heathens and pagans (1 Corinthians 10:20, 21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Think very seriously and soberly about what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:19: "Indeed, there have to be *factions* [like denominations] among you, so that the *genuine* among you can be recognized" (*Modern Language*; emphases added). That statement is a *generality*, as well as a *technicality*, well worth considering. Indeed, such technicalities and generalities are spread throughout God's word. Our job as responsible students of the word is to learn God's *total* truth "...line upon line...precept upon precept... here a little, there a little..." (Isaiah 28:9, 10 *KJV*) and to "rightly divid[e] the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15 *KJV*). The technicalities and generalities are parts of the "whole."

## Theology

The third leg of this argumentative "milk stool" is that found in *theology*. Discussing matters of *theology* does not mean that you are, therefore, discussing matters of *God's truth*. Why would I say such a thing? Pri-

marily because a discussion in *comparative religions* is a discussion of *theology*. The basic definition of *theology* has to do with the study of how “God” (a ubiquitous term) works and the religious doctrines and matters of divinity that should or should not be included in the discussion. You don’t even have to use the Bible.

It is fair to say that one man’s *theology* is another man’s *heresy*. The existence of 32,000+ “Christian” denominations, plus all of the other religions set loose in the world, is “proof” that *theology* abounds—but that abundance does not “prove” that *truth* abounds.

I have two degrees in *theology* that were essentially based on the doctrines of the church organization with which I was associated at the time. Other *theologies* were considered in the mix of courses, but only as a means to understand why our church believed what it believed. We took a scriptural approach to “prove” our doctrines, but we were not alone in such an approach. So, we had to understand why *our* interpretation was preferred to others.

Let me give you an example of how such degrees actually handicapped me in a discussion about “truth” that I had with an old friend. The basic question he asked was how my beliefs set me apart from other churches. As I laid out the various differences and why they exist—backing them up with scriptures—I saw an air of puzzlement come over his face. He was hearing things that he had never thought of and absolutely had never encountered.

While he thought they were remarkable, he avoided the next step of getting involved in a search to understand them. How? At a certain point in the conversation, he said: “Larry, you have all of this...this... *theology*. I have only what I have heard from others over the years.” I realized at that point that I had experienced a moment not unlike that of the Apostle Paul in Acts 26:28.

Festus, the governor of Judaea (ca. A.D. 60-62), took Paul to Jerusalem to be judged by King Agrippa for charges made against him by the Jewish high priest and certain influential Jews. If you read Acts 25 and 26, you can understand the conversation that took place and the points Paul made in his defense. In 26:24, Festus exclaims that Paul is *crazy*. Paul’s response is that Agrippa is not ignorant of what he was saying. When he asked Agrippa if he believed the prophets about Jesus Christ (v. 27), Agrippa gave an answer that sig-

naled his lack of ignorance about Paul’s claims: “You almost persuaded me to become a Christian.”

The difference between my friend and Agrippa was that my friend *was* ignorant of *some* of the things about which I spoke. And, when he compared what he knew with what he was ignorant of, it tripped the “breaker” in his brain and the “disconnect” overwhelmed him. My bad for the overload. The “disconnect” prevented him from even *wanting* to investigate what he was being told (which, really, was the *very* simple version of what I could have told him). I suppose that it left him feeling so *empty* that he saw very little hope of being able to catch up on all that he did not know.

I am not indicting myself in this matter. What my friend saw and heard (in a summarized form of the ensuing discussion) was a minister who was presenting biblical understanding that he had never before heard—it was clean, neat, orderly, and thorough. Everything had a logic grounded in scripture, and everything was related to and consistent with everything else. It put into question all of the things that he had been told by others. How could I be so right in all of the complexity that I presented to him and everyone he had known was so wrong? I had spoken to him in a *foreign language*, and he felt safer in the language he understood. To him, the problem was my *theology*.

I have since thought that, maybe, I should have used *psychology* on him instead. Maybe he would have never suspected that ploy. In truth, I was not trying to win a convert that day; I was merely explaining to him why my life had turned out so very differently from what it was when we were youngsters in the old neighborhood...when I was not a *technical specialist* in *theology*.

My greatest hope when I present the arguments (to persuade by giving reasons) for the faith that I maintain is to make you curious enough to check into it for yourself. I get specific and try to avoid *generalities*. I offer *technicalities* because they are the “fine print” to which we must pay attention if we are to have “faith” in the arguments. I discuss the “theology” of the Bible because it represents information that is defined as “God’s inspired word” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) and “God’s truth” (John 17:17). It claims to be God’s true revelation about who He is and what He is up to. In practical fact, I have declared war on biblical ignorance and excuses in the name of this marvelous God.

# The Unity of Spirit and Faith:

A Message to the Scattered “Churches of God”

(Ephesians 4:1-16)

---

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul sounds somewhat conflicted about what he calls *schisms*—that is, *divisions*—in the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:9, he attributes much of the problem to *spiritual stagnation*—that is, to “Christians” who have entered the faith and made no progress in maturing spiritually. The result of this *spiritual infantilism* is that they become *divided*. However, in 1 Corinthians 11:18, 19, he makes note of the divisions (*schisms*) and heresies (*sects; denominations*—different religious bodies) that exist within the Corinthian church, but he says that the reason they exist is so “...that *they which are approved* [by God] *may be made manifest among you.*”

How strange it is that *schisms* and *denominations* should exist within the true Church so that those who are *really* approved by God can be plainly shown—*clearly revealed!* Then, in discussing the distribution of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul makes it clear that there will be *differences* of *spiritual gifts*, but only *one body* (see vv. 11-31). Note in particular vv. 18-27.

I want to pursue this thought with you because of the *disparity of theological concepts* that is manifested today within all of the *divisions* and *denominations* that exist among those who call themselves the *True Church of God*. The differences that exist among us are not merely the result of the distribution of a variety of spiritual gifts. Whether we admit it or not, like it or not, believe it or not, those differences will make a *difference* in whether or not we can ever become *one body* before the return of Jesus Christ. It is important for us to discuss this because our *schisms* and *denominations* (one source estimating 2,000+ among the groups that once belonged to the former Worldwide Church of God) suggest that we really do not have the *unity of faith and spirit* that should exist among us...or the *will* to do whatever is necessary to make it a working reality...again.

---

## Luther’s Folly

Martin Luther opened a veritable “Pandora’s Box” when he made a single principle a centerpiece of his argument with the Roman Catholic Church. Pandora, in Greek mythology, was believed to have been the first mortal woman. Her curiosity led her to open a mysterious box that contained all of the human ills and let them loose into the wider world. One might well guess that, once released, it would be very difficult to put them back into the box. Pandora, no doubt, is a myth based on Mother Eve and her curiosity about the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

In the same vein, Luther opened up a similar box of human ills when he proposed that: “Every believer is a priest under Jesus Christ and has the right to read and interpret scripture for himself as the Holy Spirit leads him.” This is one of those ways that *seem* right, but the unintended consequences are devastating (Proverbs 14:12). While this concept achieved the *tempor-*

*ary* objective for which Luther intended it, the resulting unintended consequences show it to have been *Luther’s folly*. How has this been manifested?

Prior to A.D. 2000, it was rather common to believe that there existed 400+ “Christian” denominations. Shortly after the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the *National Geographic Society* featured a documentary about “Christianity” and revealed that there were 20,000+ “Christian” denominations around the world. Sometime after A.D. 2008, Richard Ames, host of “Tomorrow’s World” (telecasted by the Living Church of God in Charlotte, NC.), said that there are now **32,000+** “Christian” denominations.

One of the major “proofs” that we have historically used to show that there exists *one True Church of God* has been the question of whether or not all of these conflicting, competitive, denominational groups can *all* be teaching God’s *truth*. If not, then who does? Next comes the catalogue of ways by which the aver-



age man can tell the difference between the True Church and the False Churches.

I am not sure that Luther thought out fully how the Holy Spirit would lead all believers to achieve the unity of spirit and faith that Paul discusses in Ephesians 4. If the Holy Spirit's job is to guide *True Christians into all truth* (John 16:13), how, then, can they be divided into so many different *schisms, sects, and denominations*?

I'm not sure that Luther thought out how the *Holy Spirit* would prevent some from favoring Peter above Paul and Paul above Apollos...some from favoring *personal importance* above the importance of letting *God* make it abundantly clear where the *servant leadership* is in the body of Christ.

Did Luther ask how this spiritual puzzle will be solved? How do you turn loose so many "priests under Jesus Christ" to bring to the world a unified interpretation of holy writ? Can we attribute the mess that is "Traditional Christianity" to a Holy Spirit that is grossly schizophrenic? Are there different Holy Spirits leading the various denominations that claim to be parts of the body of Christ? The result of Luther's Folly is a spiritual quagmire that can and does affect the unity of the members of the body of Christ.

Merely ignoring the conflicting interpretations of God's word does not eliminate the quagmire. The spiritual conflict imposed upon the members of the body actually accentuates the quagmire. The quagmire makes it plain that differences make a difference. So, do I *pretend* to agree with Luther, or do I look for another answer about the role of the individual believer in relationship to the Holy Spirit? Whom shall I choose: Peter? Paul? Apollos? Which doctrines and orthodoxy do I accept as "...the faith that was once delivered unto the saints..." (Jude 3)?

## The Source of the Problem

First Corinthians 11:1 shows that wrangling, contention, debate, strife, and variance existed in the early Church. Such attributes make it abundantly clear that something was wrong with their spirit and faith that needed to be fixed. Paul focuses on one central question: Is Christ divided? The intended conclusion should be crystal clear: If Christ is not divided, then why should His Church be divided? Solve the problems!

Luther, in his proposal, effectively made it wildly possible for the Church to continue to be divided...and

divided...and divided. The original problem, it is sad to say, existed then (and now) within those who claim to be the body of Christ.

The entire matter of *unresolved differences* has caused the members of the body to suffer (1 Corinthians 12:26). It has not promoted unity of spirit or faith (Ephesians 4:3, 13). And, we who claim to be the present-day True Church of God remain divided and denominationalized—and God, it seems, is left to throw us into a sorting bin in order to make it manifest who among us *really* represent His True People.

It is grossly ironic that we who have been called out of the *world's* denominational quagmire to be part of Christ's ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-21) cannot be truly successful in our jobs as long as we willfully remain unreconciled to one another! How can we lay hold of and effectively execute such a great responsibility if we cannot show that we know how to be reconciled to one another? What right do we have, then, to lecture the rest of "Christianity"?

I have seen very little effort made by the leaders of the major seventh-day Church of God *denominations* to reconcile with one another to establish the unity of spirit and faith and doctrine in peace and get us out of this spiritual quagmire. Why? Is it *power*? Is it *personal wisdom*? Is it *prestige* and/or *pecking order*? What does this say about our claim to be members of the one true faith...of the one body?

Has God separated us and confounded our theology so that we can be divided and scattered like those of Babel or the ancient House of Israel? Has He become so *disgusted* with our antics in His name that He will refuse to allow us to be reconciled? Have we the people of the *New Covenant* repeated the same problem that manifested itself under the *Old Covenant* where the failure to live in true covenant with God and fellowman was found in the people? We must ask and find answers to these questions if we truly desire unity of spirit and faith.

## The Remnant According to Grace

Romans 11:1-7 is a powerful piece of reasoning from the Apostle Paul. It is based on the premise that God has not cast aside *Israel* forever. This lesson was taught to *Elijah* when he thought that he was the only one left who truly represented the plan of God. God showed Elijah that He had reserved for Himself a holy remnant of Israel. Paul then uses that lesson to pro-

claim that God even yet has "...a *remnant* according to the election of grace" (v. 5).

You can see that the pattern follows a prophetic declaration by Isaiah in Isaiah 1:9: Had God not reserved for Himself "...a very small *remnant*...", Israel would have been completely obliterated like Sodom and Gomorrah." Why? Read vv. 1-8. These words are echoed by Paul in Hebrews 8:8 when he says that the fault of the first covenant was with the people.

Jesus followed this prophetic pattern when He chose 12 disciples to be trained as future kings over the 12 tribes of Israel. The Church He is building is, in fact, that *holy root of Israel* (Romans 11:16-29). All of this suggests that there is among us even today a remnant according to the election of grace. It suggests that there is yet a decision to be made by God concerning those among us who will be in the first resurrection.

Dare we entertain the thought that the divisions and denominations among the disparate groups who call themselves spiritual Israel has been our fault all along? Dare we think that God has removed His name from among us because we, too, have been "...laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters..."—children who have forsaken the Lord with our spiritual quagmire and become alienated from Him in the process?

Where is our modern-day Elijah who says to all of us: "Quit jumping back and forth with your claims of unique spiritual direction by the True God. Choose you today whether you will serve God or yourselves! You cannot remain oblivious to the glaring question that looms before you: Is Christ divided? If not, then why are you divided?" Make no mistake about this matter: we will be called to account for acting like the quagmire does not exist...that all is fine as long as we mind our own business.

## How Do We Solve the Quagmire?

First Corinthians 11:25 reveals the need for self-examination based on the implications of three questions: (a) *Are we teachable?* (b) *Are we correctable?* and (c) *Are we repentant?* To the degree that we refuse to be taught God's truth, to accept correction for our wrong-headed actions and attitudes, and to repent of those same actions and attitudes, we put the unity of God's Church into jeopardy.

In Ephesians 4, Paul discusses the characteristics the True Church needs if it is going to fulfill its assigned task of being Christ's instrument of reconcilia-

tion: (a) one body, (b) one Spirit, (c) one hope in the same calling, (d) one Lord, (e) one faith, (f) one baptism, and (g) one Father. What this suggests is that we should have a unity of purpose, a unity of doctrine, and a unity of leadership that is the product of the Holy Spirit (see Zechariah 4:6) that is given to lead us into all of God's truth as a single, unified body of believers.

A unity that is forced upon the people by one man or a group of men is not at all the same as the unity that comes by the work of the Holy Spirit. You are not automatically the leader just because you are the best and brightest or the oldest or the wealthiest or because you know more scriptural "secrets" than anyone else. We do not campaign for or compete for the leadership position. In a single unified body of believers, God will cause the leader to emerge and will set His stamp of approval upon him when he does.

Paul gave five characteristics that a person must develop when he enters the fellowship of God's True Church. In Ephesians 4:1, Paul says that we must "...walk worthy of the *vocation* wherewith..." we are called (KJV). The term *vocation* is from the Greek term *klesis*. Paul's apparent meaning is that we are to walk worthy of the invitation we received to become part of God's Kingdom, which includes the positions to which we will be appointed and the rewards that we will receive. It means that we will take upon ourselves the responsibility to live a certain kind of life because failure to do so hinders God's goals and purposes—and our wayward actions discredit the names of God and His Church.

In v. 2, Paul says that we must "...behave with all *humility*..." The Greek word for *humility* is *tapeinophrosune*. Some sources say that there is no word in the Greek language for *humility*, so this word was coined by the Christian faith. Christian humility comes from *self-knowledge*. It is the virtue by which the individual becomes aware of his own *unworthiness*. In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul warns the Corinthians about thinking too highly of themselves and comparing themselves among themselves.

How much *humility* are we willing to achieve in order to rule and reign with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God? Remember what Jesus told His disciples in John 15:5: "...Without me, you can do *nothing*." Do you have the *humility* to believe that and live accordingly?

The next virtue Paul mentions in v. 2 is *meekness*—translated from the Greek term *praotes*. It is the middle ground between two extremes (like being too

angry at everything or being angry at nothing at all). *Praotes* means that we will be appropriately angry at the right time and in the right way. It also describes someone or something that has come completely under discipline and control.

Paul tells the Romans that we are *controlled* by God's Holy Spirit *if that Spirit lives in us*. Otherwise, we are controlled by the carnal mind (8:9, 14). In order to get and maintain that control, one has to put to death the deeds of the carnal mind (v. 13). So, the true member of God's True Church is one who is under **God's** control instead of his own carnal mind.

The third virtue in v. 2 comes from the Greek word *makrothumia*, which describes an individual who is *longsuffering* because he has a *great heart*. It describes a person who endures to the end (see Matthew 24:13)—never giving up regardless of what he has to do to endure in order to reap the promise and receive his reward. It is also characteristic of the person who is extraordinarily *patient* with others. He refuses to take revenge or retaliate against wrongdoers. He bears insult and injury without bitterness or complaint. This is a description of God and Jesus Christ (see Romans 2:4; 1 Peter 3:15, 20; 1 Timothy 1:16). The True Christian must have the patience toward his fellow man that God and Christ have shown to him.

The fourth great virtue of the True Christian is *love*. True Christian love was something that was so new that the early Christian writers used an unusual term to express it: *agape*, an unconquerable benevolence that is an affection toward others that will always seek nothing but their highest good regardless of what they might say about us or do against us. It is the quality of mind that compels the True Christian to never feel any bitterness, never feel any desire for revenge, but always seek nothing but the highest good for all men.

As odd as it might seem, the fourth virtue makes the fifth virtue possible. Paul says in v. 3 that the fifth virtue is *peace*. It is the Greek term *eirēne*, which means *peace* that is caused by *harmony*—**the pleasant agreement among the various parts**. This kind of harmony cannot exist as long as *self* is the center of things—as long as our own feelings, our own prestige, and our own desires are the only things that matter. This peace can exist only when we cease to make *self* the

center of things and when we think more of others than we do ourselves.

*Self* kills peace. *Self* kills unity. If *self* dominates, then we can never be anything more than a *disintegrated collection of warring units*. When *self* dies and *Christ* springs to life in our minds and hearts through God's Holy Spirit, then we will have the peace, the oneness, the togetherness, the spiritual unity that is the hallmark of God's True Church.

The rest of Ephesians 4 is predicated on those five virtues: humility, meekness, longsuffering, agape love, and peace. We can have one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father only if we surrender ourselves to God to be led by His Holy Spirit instead of *self*.

We can be led into greater spiritual maturity and personal improvements by realizing that God has set among us men who are spiritually capable of training us to the point of exposing the deceivers and their deceptive devices—in effect, preventing us from being tossed back and forth by those who would otherwise lead us away from our invitation to be part of the Kingdom of God.

## Conclusion

Read Philippians 2:5-11 to see the absolute *humility* of the God-being who became Jesus Christ. Though equal in every way to His eternal companion, this great God-being divested Himself of His rightful equal position to become a *servant* and a *human*.

How willing are you to do what is necessary to achieve the unity of Spirit and faith that God desires for His True Church? How willing are you to refuse to be a loner and do only what pleases you? Are you *teachable*? *Correctable*? *Repentant*? How you answer those questions and surrender to the direction and control of God's Holy Spirit will affect how God will complete His invitation for you to be part of the body of Jesus Christ...and His Kingdom. Unless there is a coordinated *oneness* in the body of Jesus Christ, **God's work is hindered**. When we totally surrender to God through Jesus Christ, the unity of Spirit and faith will be **inevitable**...and we will be one body...again.

# “Reading Between the Lines”

---

The expression “reading between the lines” suggests that what is not said can be of primary importance...and thus render what is said to the level of secondary importance or less. The following example should adequately illustrate the point: “Pastor Smith came to work *sober* on Sunday.” Although it is a simple statement of fact, right away your attention is focused on the word *sober*—and all of the various colors of meaning it can have...from being drunk to being very grave in attitude and speech. It can suggest that he is otherwise never sober, or it can suggest that he is sober from time to time—whatever the term *sober* is supposed to mean. When you juxtapose the words *sober* and *Pastor*, then you have the potential of something scandalous—or a mere fact that says nothing about his sobriety every other day of the week. “Reading between the lines” can be a dangerous exercise if it is not based on an understanding of *truth*. This is a lengthy lesson that demonstrates the treachery that can be hidden “between the lines.”

---

## The Influence of Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165)

Let’s take a look at a more serious and dangerous approach to “reading between the lines.” Justin Martyr, a so-called “Church Father” who lived between A.D. 100-165, “read between the lines” when he tried to make a cause-effect connection between some historical events: (a) the Jews had murdered Jesus Christ and God’s prophets (Matthew 23:37; Romans 11:3), and (b) Rome had thoroughly defeated the Jews in their revolts against the Empire in A.D. 70 and 135. The murder of Jesus Christ and God’s prophets *caused* God to pour out unusual punishment upon the Jews in the aftermath. Why?

Justin and other Gentile Christians were searching for reasons to distance the “Christian” Church from Judaism because of the ensuing Roman persecution of the Jews. Gentiles who became Christians did not want to be associated with the Jews (Christianity was at first a *Jewish* sect) and suffer persecutions that were basically the fault of the Jews. Justin, being a Gentile, wanted the Romans to know that the Gentile Christians were not *Jewish* and that they did not pose any kind of threat to the Empire. He and other “Church Fathers” began a campaign to show how Rome could *differentiate* between them and the Jews.

One of the momentous conclusions to which Justin came seemed profound...unless you know what lay “between the lines.” Here is his conclusion as stated in his *Dialogue* (18, 2)—in fact, this is his thesis throughout his *Dialogue* with Trypho:

We, too, would observe your circumcision of the flesh, your Sabbath days, and in a word, all your festivals, if we were not aware of the reason why they were imposed upon you, namely, because of your sins and your hardness of heart.

Whatever Rome had dealt out to the Jews was simply more “proof” that God was involved against them because of their sins. It is not difficult to deduce such a thing from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. God had warned all of Israel not to sin against Him because of the dire consequences that would follow. That was not part of Justin’s reasoning processes.

He went further to claim that the laws, statutes, ordinances, et cetera were *originally* imposed upon the Jews *from the very beginning* because God knew *beforehand* what kind of despicable people they were going to be. God was simply singling them out for punishment by imposing those things on them in order to make them stand out among the nations of the world (*Dialogue*, chapter 92).

Make note of this explanation from *Dialogue* (23, 1, 2):

If we do not accept this conclusion, then we shall fall into absurd ideas, as the nonsense either that our God is not the same God who existed in the days of Henoch [Enoch] and all the others, who were not circumcised in the flesh, and did not observe the Sabbaths and other rites, since Moses only imposed them later; or that God does not wish each suc-

ceeding generation of mankind always to perform the same acts of righteousness. Either supposition is ridiculous and preposterous. *Therefore we must conclude that God, who is immutable, ordered these and similar things to be done only because of sinful men* (emphasis added).

It is absurd to conclude that God's Law did not exist at all between the creation of Adam and the institution of the "marriage" covenant between the Lord God and Israel with Moses as His intermediary. That is a misunderstanding of Romans 5:13. Adam and Eve and Cain were judged by God's law, as were those who died in the universal flood. Read 1 John 3:4 and Romans 6:23. How can you have the Lord God's statement in Genesis 26:5 if God's law was not in force until Moses delivered it *from the Lord God at Sinai*? *Moses* was not the legal genius who thought up and legislated "God's Law"! Read all of the places in Exodus through Deuteronomy where it says something like: "And the Lord said to Moses...." Clearly, Moses was an intermediary between the Lord God and Israel. Know, too, that Judah was only one of the 12 tribes of Israel (read Revelation 7:1-8 and Ezekiel 37:11-28).

This conclusion by Justin Martyr and others was important in helping to move the "Christian" Church away from observing the seventh-day Sabbath to observing Sunday. This concept stills holds sway today in what is called "New Covenant" and "Dispensation" theology. They have "read between the lines" something that is not there and...have taken God's truth off-course as a result.

Let's practice our own "reading between the lines" here and see what we can come up with. Consider in this that Deuteronomy 12:29-32 is an integral part of the Lord God's legislation to all of Israel through Moses. If you keep that vital principle in mind, then you can see how this *differentiation from the Jews* is not based on scriptural revelation; it is based on a theology that moves away from the "faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Using the information presented above, you should get a clear picture of the problem with Justin's theology.

Justin was a Gentile who was converted to Christianity in A.D. 132. He was trained in Greek philosophy and was a professional teacher of that subject matter. As impressive as his credentials might have been otherwise, his background has to be regarded as

a *militating* factor in his brand of "Christianity." Among some of his core beliefs were these:

1. The Gentiles were called of God to *replace* Israel in the covenant relationship—a new covenant having been instituted by Jesus Christ to confirm that change.
2. Greek philosophy was the preparatory foundation for giving meaning to the truths of the Christian faith.
3. His doctrine of *Logos spermatikos* held that a divine "seed" of God's word (the truth) had been sown into *all* of mankind's religions—so, they are as much "Christian" as those in "Christianity".
4. John 1:14 was a revelation of the truth of this doctrine when John taught that the *Logos* became flesh (pagan philosophers derived the "truth" about the *Logos spermatikos* from the Old Testament...presumably from Genesis 3:15).
5. He depended on the philosophical tenets of Middle Platonism more than the philosophical tenets of Stoicism to frame his concepts and to select his terminology.

What is "between the lines" here? Simply put, he paid no attention to Deuteronomy 12:29-32! He considered that for the *Jews* only. He "Hellenized" the original Christian faith by mixing and mingling Greek religion and philosophy with God's truth!

Others, taking their cue from Justin Martyr, have taught some "variants" of his theology. Some have taught that the *Logos spermatikos* is the primordial substance from which all of life as we know it is derived—John 1:3 possibly serving as the model from which the idea came for the evolutionary concept that all life came from a green swamp slime that mysteriously appeared out of nowhere from nothing. Some use his doctrine to claim that all religions are merely different "paths" to "God" and the after-life rewards.

Based on what you presently know of God's truth, what do you "read between the lines" from this information? While you are thinking about that, remember that Justin Martyr was a major figure in moving

Apostolic Christianity away from its so-called “Jewish” roots to its new *Gentile* roots.

## Learning the Way of the Heathen

Here is another exercise in “reading between the lines”: It is commonly taught that early Christians, led by some of the original Apostles, began observing Sunday in place of the seventh-day Sabbath soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this exercise, I want you to understand how to get the truth of God from His word without having to import into it anything from pagan religious or philosophical sources...especially those things that are filtered through the colored lenses of Greek philosophy and represented as being “Christian.”

Jeremiah 10 is a good starting point. The Lord God’s (the one who became Jesus Christ) instruction is that His people are not to *learn* the ways of the heathen nations—and, consistent with Deuteronomy 12:29-32, use them in worship of Him. This is different from learning them as a matter of historical information. Paul’s experience in Athens with the Greek philosophers is an example of this (Acts 17:16-34). Paul had knowledge of the Greek philosophy and literature, but he did not adopt it into his worship of the true God.

*Learning* in Jeremiah 10:2 presupposes something more than an *academic* acquisition of knowledge. This injunction by the Lord God specifically involves adopting the philosophical and religious systems and practices of the heathens with the same conviction, faith, and dedication as one should practice God’s revealed truth. Read the entire chapter and note how God inspires Jeremiah to stress the vanity, senselessness, foolishness, and lack of true knowledge contained in all that the heathens have worshipped and adored.

Read Deuteronomy 12:1-5, 8 and see where the Lord God commanded Israel to destroy all of the heathen’s religious sites and all of the accoutrement connected to them. He commanded Moses to tell Israel two most important things: (1) They were not to attempt in any way whatsoever to worship God in the manner of the heathens’ religions (v. 4), and (2) they were not to be *self-righteous* and “do their own thing” in religious matters (v. 8). Read Exodus 20:3-7 and see whether or not the Lord God wants to share His glory with other so-called “Gods.” In Isaiah 42:8, the Lord God declares: “I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.” Based on this information, have you begun

yet to “read between the lines”—in whole or in part—about the validity of Justin Martyr’s teachings?

Acts 17:16-34 is illustrative of the problem with philosophy in general and Greek philosophy in particular. Verse 21 says that these men (who considered themselves custodians of all the teachings that introduced new religions and foreign gods) spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest philosophical and religious ideas. Paul called them “too superstitious” (KJV; v. 22). Some, like the NIV, translate it to read “very religious.”

The Greek term that Paul used there could be translated either way—depending on the context of his follow-up comments. They would not know if he was *complimenting* them for being “very religious” or *severely rebuking* them for being “too superstitious” until he made his point. In the end, Paul told them that their multitudinous representations of “God” were nothing but the works of the hands of men and that it only displayed their own *ignorance* of the true God (vv. 29, 30). He was *severely rebuking* them for their blatant superstition.

In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns the Colossians about allowing someone to take them “captive” through hollow and deceptive *philosophy*. Why? Because it depends so much on *human* traditions and false, worldly, religious and elementary teachings (that is, teachings about elemental spirits found in fire, wind, earth, and water). The Colossian heresy that Paul was counteracting taught that one needed to combine faith in Christ with secret knowledge (*gnosis*) and with *man-made* regulations concerning physical and external practices like circumcision, eating and drinking, and religious festivals (see vv. 22, 23). Note how Paul makes a distinction between the mixture of *Greek philosophy* and *biblical truth*.

Finally, if there is any value in Paul’s comments in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, then you should be able to understand two salient points:

1. All human-devised *philosophies* and *religions* are meaningless because they have a wrong concept of God and what He has revealed as His truth (see John 4:23, 24 and 17:17).
2. Man’s greatest wisdom is nothing but *foolishness* because it does not match the infinite wisdom of God (see Isaiah 55:8, 9).

Humans can become very arrogant about what they know and believe—especially if they drape it with great religious and philosophical content. So, God’s original injunction against heathen religion holds true in the teachings of the New Testament (see

also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The New Testament Christian is no more allowed by God to “learn the way of the heathen” than was ancient Israel. Read between the lines: Justin was very wrong in his teachings.

---

# God’s Revelation About “Counterfeit Christianity”

---

**M**atthew 24:4, 5 reveals in Jesus Christ’s prophecy that there will be so-called “Christians” who will come claiming to represent Jesus Christ in one way or another. We have already discussed some instances where this occurred. By about A.D. 55, Paul (who, coincidentally, was one of the *first* New Testament writers) was well entrenched in theological warfare against the pretenders. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-58, Paul is trying to correct one of the earliest heresies in the new Christian faith—a heresy that taught that there is no such thing as a resurrection from the dead. Some of this heresy was probably based on the Greek concept of man, which was largely based on the Platonic doctrine that the *real man* is an immortal soul that does not need to be raised from the dead because it is incapable of dying.

Jude describes these “counterfeits” as those who “crept in unawares” and attempted to corrupt the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3, 4). The objective of this lesson is to show how that “counterfeit Christianity” came into being and spread like leavening among the true Church of God. Few are aware of how this happened, and fewer still really care enough to study into it. This lesson is like a “Cliff Notes” to the entire sordid history of the true Church’s battle against “counterfeit Christianity.”

---

## *Another Jesus, Another Gospel, Another Spirit*

In late A.D. 55, Paul sent the Corinthians a second letter to warn them of the rising threat to God’s truth: men who came *pretending* to be apostles and ministers of God. This concerned Paul because of the content of his first letter: the Corinthians were unskilled in scriptural understanding, essentially illiterate in fundamental understanding of God’s truth, carnal, and a bit less than spiritual “babes” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Paul’s chastisement of the Corinthians seems to be based on the idea that they had had enough instruction and experience to have achieved a more mature level of faith and understanding. Their lack of spiritual growth and understanding greatly concerned Paul.

In 2 Corinthians 11:4, he accuses the Corinthians of putting up with the imposters’ preaching of *another* Jesus, *another* gospel, and *another* spirit. Some might

wonder if preaching Jesus and Him crucified is sufficient for salvation purposes. Before you go down that road, look at John 4:23, 24. How does *truth* figure into the belief structure and what one preaches and teaches? Consider Matthew 7:21-23. What part does *God’s will* play in what you preach and teach and believe and practice? If His word is truth (John 17:17), and if God’s true Church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), are you allowed to play loose with your beliefs and practices under the name of Jesus Christ?

In vv. 13-15, Paul explains that these false apostles with their false doctrines were *masquerading* as ministers of righteousness. He puts them in league with Satan the Devil, the master masquerader. However, he shows that they were using “Christian” concepts that made them appear to be “ministers of righteousness.” No doubt, some of them were Gnostics who were peddling their own brand of “Christianity.” They were fakes.

## The Perverted Gospel

Sometime between A.D. 53-57, Paul also sent a letter to the Galatians opposing those who preached what he called a “perverted gospel” (Galatians 1:6-9)—even pronouncing a severe curse upon them or any angel that propagated any such gospel. These gospel perverters called themselves “Christians.” You can continue to look at the writings of Peter, John, and Jude to understand their concerns about a variety of “Christian” heresies based on a mixture of Greek philosophy and biblical truth. All of this demonstrates that a *counterfeit* “Christianity” arose very soon after Jesus Christ’s ascension to the right hand of the Father.

So, as briefly demonstrated, there were so-called “Christians” who deviated significantly from God’s revealed truth. Would it be any wonder, then, that the *deviation* would increase as the so-called “Christian” church became more and more *Gentile* and less and less *Jewish*? Would it be any wonder that strange, new doctrines were presented in the guise of “Christian” theology? What could you “read between the lines” as the real reason for the development of so many “Christian” denominations today—in excess of 32,000? Are they merely different paths toward the same “Christian” goal? If not, why not?

To accentuate the seriousness of this problem, I want to take the issue of *anti-Semitic bias* as a prime example. What is the *real* issue in this theological wrestling match among those who called themselves “Christian”? Why does that issue still affect the relationship among 32,000+ “Christian” denominations throughout the world today?

### The Early Rise of an *Anti-Judaism of Differentiation*

(Before reading the following, please read Matthew 24:4, 5; John 9:22; and John 16:2.)

There are two references in the book of Acts that inform us that early Christianity was considered to be a *Jewish sect*. In Acts 24:5, a Jewish lawyer named Tertullius, who was sent to prosecute Paul before Felix (the governor of Caesarea), refers to them as the *Nazarene sect*—a reference to Jesus of Nazareth (see references like Matthew 2:23; Mark 14:67; 16:6; Acts 3:6; 10:38; and 26:9). In Acts 24:14, Paul replies to the charges made against him by saying: “...I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the

Way, *which they* [that is, the Jews] *call a sect*.” Jesus Christ had told the Samaritan woman that “...salvation is *from the Jews*” (John 4:22). What developed as a result of the Roman prosecution of military action against the Jews for their rebellions, their subsequent specific persecution of the Jews, and the increasing number of Gentile conversions into Christianity led to something that is called by some *anti-Judaism of differentiation*. What this means is quite simple...and quite revealing in its historical implications.

As the number of converted Gentiles increased, the Christian sect became less “Jewish” and, subsequently, even less of a political threat to Rome. However, since they were still considered to be “Jews,” they were included in Rome’s persecutions of the Jews.

For example, consider that Hadrian (between A.D. 132 and 135) completed the destruction of Jerusalem during the Barkokba Rebellion and, on the ruins, raised an entirely new city that he named *Aelia Capitolina*. Numerous Jews and Jewish Christians fled to other countries, and those who did not were expelled from the city and forbidden under penalty of death to re-enter it, prohibited from studying the *Torah*, and forbidden to practice circumcision, observe the seventh-day Sabbath, the holy days and other feasts and ritualistic practices. The Jewish Encyclopedia, in its article on “Barkokba,” says that “...it seemed as if Hadrian desired to *annihilate* the Jewish people...” (1907; Vol. II; p. 509’ emphasis added).

The Gentiles, therefore, did not think that it was equitable for them to suffer for what was, essentially, a “Jewish” problem. Most of them did not even live in Jewish territory. They did not like the guilt-by-association leveled against them by the Romans. They wanted Rome to *differentiate* between them and the Jews. However, Rome’s early attitude was even simpler: If it walks like a *Jew*, talks like a *Jew*, and looks like a *Jew*, then it must be a *Jew*. Read between the lines! If you do not want to be persecuted by Rome, then do not walk, talk, and look “Jewish”! How do you go about effecting the change that must take place? Here is where Proverbs 14:12 begins to be applied: “There is a way that *seems right, but....*”

The late Samuelle Bacchiocchi, in his work *From Sabbath to Sunday*, writes:

This internal need of the Christian community to develop what may be called an *anti-Judaism of differentiation* found expression particularly in the development of *unwar-*



*ranted* criteria of *Scriptural hermeneutic* through which *Jewish history and observances could be made void of meaning and function*” (p. 183; emphases added).

In other words, they now faced what they considered to be the necessity of interpreting and explaining Scripture *without a Jewish viewpoint and religious practice*.

Men like Justin Martyr, having witnessed in recent history the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 and the crushing of the Jewish Barkokba Rebellion by Hadrian between A.D. 132 and 135, attempted to prove to Rome that Christians (especially Gentile Christians) had no link to Israel and the land of Judea and were irreproachable subjects of the Empire. Add to that the fact that: (a) Hadrian had outlawed circumcision, Sabbath, festivals, ritual observances, and reading the *Torah*, and (b) Greek and Latin authors persistently attacked and ridiculed all things *Jewish*, and it should not surprise you that some elements of “Christianity” would begin to sever ties with their *Jewish* roots and move away from distinctively *Jewish* religious observances to new “Christian” observances.

Paul’s warning in Romans 11:17-21 that the “holy root” of *Israel* supports the Gentiles, not the other way around, fell on deaf ears...as did Jesus Christ’s statement to the Samaritan woman about salvation being of the *Jews*. It was not until I understood Romans 11 that I could adequately understand Jeremiah 31:31-34. When I understood that, then I could understand the error in “Dispensational Theology” that teaches that God works in different ways with different dispensations of mankind; therefore, buttressing their claim that God made *earthly* promises to the *Jews* and *heavenly* promises to the *Christians*. That understood, I could understand Paul’s argument that the *holy root of the elect remnant of Israel* supports the Gentiles. Oddly enough, Judah, Benjamin, and Levi were the remnant left of the *whole community of Israel!*

## The “Pretenders” Among Us

Let’s consider some examples of the “pretenders” who were among the early Christians in order to demonstrate how the *anti-Judaism of differentiation* worked, as well as how the reinterpretation and explanation of scripture was employed. One of the first ones was Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (A.D. 98-117). He taught that Christians should not *Judaize*. They

were not to practice Christianity according to the pattern of the Jewish religion. He claimed that even the earliest prophets imitated Christ, not the Jews. While he did not advocate moving to Sunday worship, he provided the “toe-hold” or “launching pad” for that to be done.

It is important to understand that once you start down that way that *seems* right, it will be very difficult to discover the error of your way. If all of your logic is built upon the *appearance of being right*, then you will be blind to your mistakes.

The next step came with the publication of *The Epistle of Barnabas* between A.D. 130 and 138. It is widely recognized as a *pseudonymous* work of someone other than the Apostle Barnabas, who is first mentioned in Acts 4:36. This work attempted to neutralize *Jewish beliefs and practices* by claiming that they had no historic validity. To make sure that such claims had a foundation of “truth,” scripture was interpreted using an *allegorical method* by which the meaning is derived from symbolism rather than by what is actually stated.

They could point to Paul’s use of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4:21-31 as an allegorical interpretation of history in order to validate their claims. This method of interpretation enabled them to conclude that God did not intend the *literal practice of observing the seventh-day Sabbath* during our present day and time. The true Sabbath, they claimed, will be instituted at the return of Jesus Christ because man is presently too impure and unholy to observe it properly.

*Barnabas* also used scriptures like Amos 5:21-26 and Isaiah 1:11-15 to emphasize God’s hatred of Jewish beliefs and practices—never mind that Amos went to the House of Israel...not the House of Judah. *Barnabas* also introduced the concept of the *eighth day*, which supposedly marks the beginning of another world (new heavens and new earth) and the prolongation of the Sabbath to be introduced at Christ’s return. All of this, by the way, was supposedly symbolized by the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the *eighth day* that is symbolized by Sunday.

The third step came when Justin Martyr declared that the seventh-day Sabbath was a *temporary ordinance* derived from Moses which God did not intend to be kept *literally*. Why? Because God Himself does not stop controlling the movement of the universe on that day. He *works 24/7*. Technically, you can support that claim by reading the statement in Psalm 121:3, 4 that says that God never slumbers nor sleeps. You can also read John 5:17 where Jesus Christ declared that “My

Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” Therefore, Justin concluded, God imposed the Sabbath solely on the Jews as a mark to single them out for well-deserved punishment for their infidelities. This would imply that God is guilty of imposing discriminatory ordinances for a negative purpose.

As a fourth step, consider reaction of some of the “Church Fathers” to Marcion’s heresy. Marcion set up his headquarters in Rome about A.D. 144. It is generally known in theological circles that Marcion’s anti-Judaic and anti-Sabbath teachings were accepted far and wide as part of his brand of “Christianity.” Fifty years later, another so-called “Church Father,” Tertullian, was still defending North African “Christians” from Marcion’s heresies. Justin Martyr wrote that “...many believe [Marcion] as though he alone knew the truth.” Now notice how Epiphanius described Marcion’s theology: “[Marcion ordered his followers]...to fast on the Sabbath justifying it this way: Because it is the rest of the *God of the Jews*...we fast on that day in order not to accomplish on that day what was ordained by the *God of the Jews*.” Read between the lines! Why call the God of the Old Testament the *God of the Jews*? Because of such sentiments, it was the practice of the Roman Catholic Church at one time not to serve the *Eucharist* on the seventh-day Sabbath.

Tertullian defended the scriptural evidence that the God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament. Nevertheless, he held that God has always despised the Sabbath and other religious holy days (never mind that the Lord God who commanded them became Jesus Christ). He based his conclusion on Isaiah 1:13, 14. He said that it proves that the Lord God hates the Jewish Sabbaths, sacrifices, and holy day observances. He used Hosea 2:1 to show where the Lord God declared that He would stop them.

How do you answer such claims? Read Isaiah 1:2-9 to see that the majority of the nation of Israel was apostate—the Lord God having reserved only a righteous remnant to keep from completely destroying Israel. Read Hosea’s record in which the Lord God accused the *House of Israel*—not the *House of Judah*—of giving all credit for her plentiful crops to Ba’al and using His gold and silver to make idols (2:8). They had learned the way of the heathens and mixed pagan philosophies and religious practices, along with pagan sacrifices and the attendant sexual immorality, with their worship of the Lord God (Isaiah 1:22). They had, in fact, attempted to share God’s glory with other gods

and idols! Read Haggai 2:11-14 to understand how they had caused God’s truth to become *unclean* through this mixture. Read also Deuteronomy 12:29-32. God’s reaction should have been *predictable!* Either they would change, or He would cease being their God.

A considerable flaw is injected into any Christian theology that does not know or distinguish the difference between the House of Israel and the House of Judah. The same is true of any theology that does not know or distinguish the difference between *God’s Law* and anything independently legislated by Moses or the Jews. For better understanding, read Leviticus 23:1-4 and Ezekiel 20:2-26. Notice the possessive first person singular: my. “There’s your sign!”

## Conclusion: the Gentile Motive

Apparently, it was more important for those like Tertullian to cast off the *Jewish* appearance in order for a new “Christian” image to appear. Changing the interpretation and explanation of scripture was more important than concentrating on the *truth* of the text. Although this history of the so-called “Christian” Church is widely known among theologians and biblical scholars, they seem to be unable to “connect the dots” and “read between the lines” to understand its significance in light of Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew 24:4, 5. Apparently, they are still affected by the *anti-Judaism of differentiation* process. Yet, this new so-called “Christian” Church moved full-steam ahead making changes to scriptural interpretation and explanation so they could be *differentiated* from the Jews.

I am not suggesting that modern Christianity should be practicing the Temple rituals legislated by the Lord God through Moses—or, the Sabbath rituals adopted by the synagogues after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. (We could add to that the rituals practiced by both Catholic and Protestant churches.) Outside of those environments, neither Jesus Christ nor the Apostles were involved in rituals when they simply went to the people to preach and teach the gospel of the coming Kingdom. Ritualism, in and of itself, is not the pathway that gives *bona fide* credentials to what you preach and teach.

God’s law was not given only to the *Jews*. It was given to the *whole Israelite community/nation*. Moses adequately demonstrated in Genesis 32:28; 35:9, 10, 23-26; and 49 that the man Jacob (re-named *Israel*) fathered 12 sons—the fourth of whom was *Judah*,

from whom the *Jews* are descended (read 2 Kings 16:1-7 to see the first time the term *Jews* is used in scripture). Leviticus 23:2 shows the Lord God commanding Moses to give His law to “the children of Israel.” That’s the entire nation, not just to one House or the other.

In Matthew 5:17-19, you see Jesus Christ (who had been the Lord God of the Old Testament in His pre-incarnational life) saying that He did not come to destroy the Law or change it in any way; He came to fulfill its intended purpose and meaning. Jeremiah 31:31-34 shows that the same Law of God will be put into the hearts and minds of God’s people well beyond the return of Jesus Christ. Yet, the “pretenders” did away with it and claimed that it only applied to the extraordinarily sinful *Jews* to mark them as such.

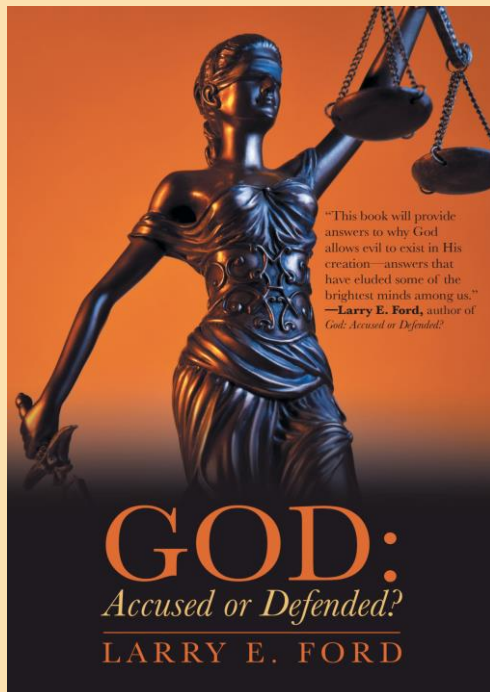
Thus, you should understand that the overriding motive was to prejudice Gentile converts against all things *Jewish* by designating the God of the Old Testament as the *God of the Jews* and the commandments, rituals, and holy days He gave them as *Jewish law*. That implied heavily that all of Israel was *Jewish*. Paul for instance, was from the tribe of *Benjamin* (Romans 11:1). Moses was from the tribe of *Levi* (Exodus 2:1-10). Where is the *truth* in their *anti-Semitic bias*?

Why would the Roman Church not serve the Eucharist on the seventh-day Sabbath? They imposed a fast on the Church from Thursday night until Saturday

night because they taught that Jesus was taken prisoner Thursday night, crucified on Friday, and laid *dead* in the grave on the seventh-day Sabbath. They were conditioning “Christians” to refuse to honor the seventh-day Sabbath as a delight (Isaiah 58:13, 14). Instead, they taught that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday morning and made Sunday a day of great joy and celebration. Two days of fasting can do that to you.

The spurious document *Didascalia Apostolorum* (which pretends to have been written by the Apostles at the time of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15) says that the Sabbath was laid upon the Jews as a perpetual “...mourning for their destruction.” The Roman Catholics confirm that this document is spurious and should be dated during the 200s A.D. James’ conclusion at the Jerusalem Council was that the four things they required of Gentile converts was sufficient because they could learn anything else they needed to know in the synagogues in most cities each Sabbath (see Acts 15:13-21).

How much can you “read between the lines” from this historically verifiable information? Would you be deceived by such superficiality and *anti-Semitic bias*? You need to take notice because Jesus Christ says in Matthew 24:23-25 that there is coming a time when you might have to face such a situation. Are you willing to risk your eternal life on the word of a “pretender”? Make up your mind soon.



The Seventh Day Christian Assembly, Inc. is now offering *God: Accused or Defended?* to the public in order to explain some of the most trying events at large in our world today. It is a “must read” book.

In *God: Accused or Defended?*, the author tackles a prickly subject about whether or not God is responsible for allowing both natural evils and moral evils to exist in His creation. The book is a theodicy that unravels some of the most tangled and knotted issues involved in this “paradox.” Using his many years of experience in biblical studies, he resolves that “paradox.”

You can order directly from [www.westbowpress.com](http://www.westbowpress.com)  
(A Division of Thomas Nelson and Zondervan).

Typical Ordering Time = 7-10 business days

ISBN #: 6x9 Paperback (978-1-4908-7667-2)  
6x9 Hardcover (978-1-4908-7668-9)  
Ebook (978-1-4908-7666-5)

You can also order this book from your local bookstore.